

The invention in which an exclusive right is claimed is defined by the following:

1. A method for determining at least whether any official result is valid for an online game session when a result is in dispute and if so, determining the official result, comprising the steps of:

(a) establishing a trust rating for each player connecting to an online gaming service and participating in game sessions, based upon prior conduct of each player when playing online games, said trust rating being indicative of a level of trust that is associated with each player by the online gaming service;

(b) storing the trust rating for each player in a storage accessible by the online gaming service;

(c) updating the trust rating for a player when the player participates in successive online game sessions, based upon predefined rules relating to results reported by the players participating in the game sessions; and

(d) determining at least whether any official result is valid for a game session and if so, determining the official result for the game session, both determinations being made as a function of the results reported by the players and the trust ratings of the players participating in the game session.

2. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

(a) requiring results for all of the players participating in a game session to be reported by each player participating in the game session; and

(b) increasing the trust ratings of all of the players in the game session, if the same results are reported by all of the participants in the game session.

3. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of maintaining a separate trust rating for a player for each online game title in which the player participates.

4. The method of Claim 1, wherein the step of establishing the trust rating comprises the step of changing a value of at least one of a plurality of parameters in response to a condition detected during a game session or after the game session is completed.

5. The method of Claim 4, wherein the plurality of parameters for a player are defined by a corresponding plurality of different counters, and wherein the step of changing the value of at least one of the plurality of parameters comprises the step of incrementing or decrementing the value of at least one of the plurality of counters.

6. The method of Claim 5, further comprising the step of applying a weighting factor to the values of the counters stored for a player in determining the trust rating of the player.

7. The method of Claim 6, further comprising the step of applying a greater weighting factor for at least one of the values of the plurality of counters in connection with results of a tournament game session than in connection with the results of a game session that is not part of a tournament.

8. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of reducing the trust rating for a player who starts a game session, but does not complete the game session.

9. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of reducing the trust rating of all players in a game session if any player sends a signal to the gaming service using a less preferred protocol indicating that the player is unable to communicate with the gaming service using a signal having a preferred protocol, because the player may be experiencing packet flooding by another player.

10. The method of Claim 9, wherein the step of updating the trust rating of a player comprises the step of improving the trust rating of all players participating in the game session if all of the following are true:

- (a) a trusted majority of players participating reported results for the game session;
- (b) all of the results reported by the majority are in agreement; and
- (c) no player has communicated with the gaming service using the signal having the less preferred protocol to indicate that the player was unable to communicate with the gaming service using the signal having the preferred protocol.

11. The method of Claim 10, wherein if less than the trusted majority of players reports results, the trust rating of all of the players in the game session is reduced.

12. The method of Claim 1, wherein if less than a predefined portion of the players participating in a game session report results, the trust rating of all of the players who were originally participating in the game session is reduced.

13. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of changing the trust rating of a player as a function of time, so that more recent updates have a greater weight in modifying the trust rating than previous updates.

14. The method of Claim 1, wherein a majority quorum of a game session is determined to exist, if a set of players report the same results, and the sum of the trust ratings of said players is greater than a predefined portion of the total trust rating for all players in the game session, so that results reported by a majority quorum are used for the official result for the game session.

15. The method of Claim 14, wherein a non-majority quorum of a game session is determined to exist, if a set of players report the same results, and the sum of the trust ratings of said players is less than the predefined portion of the total trust rating for all players in the game session, but greater than a lesser predefined portion of the total trust rating for all of the players in the game session, so that the results reported by a highest non-majority quorum are used for the official results when no majority quorum exists.

16. A memory medium on which machine executable instructions are stored for carrying out the steps of Claim 1.

17. A server computing device at an online gaming service, said server computing device being used for determining at least whether any official result is valid for an online game session when a result is in dispute and if so, determining the official result, comprising:

- (a) a memory in which machine instructions are stored;
- (b) a network interface adapted to communicate with clients over a network to facilitate play of online games;
- (c) a processor coupled to the memory and to the network interface, said processor executing the machine instructions stored in the memory to carry out a plurality of functions, including:
  - (i) establishing a trust rating for each player connecting to the online gaming service through a client to participate in game sessions, based upon a prior conduct of each player when playing online games, said trust rating being indicative of a level of trust that is associated with each player by the online gaming service;
  - (ii) storing the trust rating for each player in the memory;
  - (iii) updating the trust rating for a player when the player participates in successive online game sessions, based upon predefined rules relating to results reported by the players participating in the game sessions; and
  - (iv) determining at least whether any official result is valid for a game session and if so, determining the official result for the game session, both determinations being made as a function of the results reported by the players and the trust ratings of the players participating in the game session.

18. The server of Claim 17, wherein each player participating in a game session is required to report results for all of the players participating in the game session; and wherein the machine instructions executed by the processor further cause the processor to increase the trust ratings of all of the players in the game session, if the same results are reported by all of the participants in the game session.

19. The server of Claim 17, wherein the machine instructions executed by the processor further cause the processor to maintain a separate trust rating for a player for each online game title in which the player participates.

20. The server of Claim 17, wherein the machine instructions executed by the processor further cause the processor to change a value of at least one of a plurality of parameters in response to a condition detected by the server computing device during a game session or after the game session is completed.

21. The server of Claim 20, wherein the plurality of parameters for a player are defined by a corresponding plurality of different counters; and wherein the machine instructions executed by the processor further cause the processor to change the value of at least one of the plurality of parameters by incrementing or decrementing the value of at least one of the plurality of counters.

22. The server of Claim 21, wherein the machine instructions executed by the processor further cause the processor to apply weighting factor to the values of the counters stored for a player in determining the trust rating of the player.

23. The server of Claim 22, wherein the machine instructions executed by the processor further cause the processor to apply a greater weighting factor for at least one of the values of the plurality of counters in connection with results of a tournament game session than in connection with the results of a game session that is not part of a tournament.

24. The server of Claim 17, wherein the machine instructions executed by the processor further cause the processor to reduce the trust rating for a player who starts a game session, but does not complete the game session.

25. The server of Claim 17, wherein the machine instructions executed by the processor further cause the processor to reduce the trust rating of all players in a game session if any player sends a signal to the gaming service using a less preferred protocol, indicating that the player is unable to communicate with the gaming service using a signal having a preferred protocol, because the player may be experiencing packet flooding by another player.

26. The server of Claim 25, wherein the machine instructions executed by the processor further cause the processor to improve the trust rating of all players participating in the game session if all of the following are true:

- (a) a trusted majority of the players participating reported results for the game session;
- (b) all of the results reported by the majority are in agreement; and
- (c) no player has communicated with the gaming service using the signal having the less preferred protocol to indicate that the player was unable to communicate with the gaming service using the signal having the preferred protocol.

27. The server of Claim 26, wherein if less than the trusted majority of players reports results, the machine instructions executed by the processor further cause the processor to reduce the trust rating of all of the players in the game session.

28. The server of Claim 17, wherein if less than a predefined portion of the players participating in a game session reports results, the machine instructions executed by the processor further cause the processor to reduce the trust rating of all of the players who were originally participating in the game session.

29. The server of Claim 17, wherein the machine instructions executed by the processor further cause the processor to change the trust rating of a player as a function of time, so that more recent updates have a greater weight in modifying the trust rating than previous updates.

30. The server of Claim 17, wherein the machine instructions executed by the processor further cause the processor to determine that a majority quorum of a game session exists, if a set of players report the same results, and the sum of the trust ratings of said players is greater than a predefined portion of the total trust rating for all players in the game session, so that results reported by a majority quorum are used for the official result for the game session.

31. The server of Claim 30, wherein the machine instructions executed by the processor further cause the processor to determine that a non-majority quorum of a game session exists, if a set of players report the same results, and the sum of the trust ratings of said players in a game session who report results is less than the predefined portion of the total trust rating for all players in the game session, but greater than a lesser predefined portion of the total trust rating for all of the players in the game session, so that the results reported by a highest non-majority quorum are used for the official results when no majority quorum exists.

32. A method for establishing a trust rating for a player of an online game on a gaming service, said gaming service using the trust rating to determine a level of trust to apply to results of a game session reported by the player, comprising the steps of:

- (a) receiving results of successive game sessions reported by the player to the gaming service;
- (b) establishing an initial trust rating for the player when the player first participates in a game session of the online game; and
- (c) as a function of differences in results reported by players in the successive online game sessions and of any conditions identified by the gaming service that are indicative of possible cheating by the player, modifying the trust rating of the player after each successive game session, wherein the trust rating of the player is improved after a game session if the player reports results that agree with the results reported by all of the other players and no condition indicative of possible cheating by the player was identified by the gaming service, but is otherwise reduced.

33. The method of Claim 32, further comprising the step of reducing the trust rating of a player who starts a game session, but does not complete the game session.

34. The method of Claim 32, wherein the gaming service determines that at least one player in a game session is cheating by packet flooding another player to prevent the other player from communicating with the gaming service and with other players.

35. The method of Claim 34, wherein the gaming service determines that at least one player is packet flooding the other player if the other player in the game session sends a message to the gaming service using a less preferred protocol, because the other player is unable to communicate with the gaming service using a more preferred protocol, communication using the less preferred protocol being able to reach the gaming service even if the other player is subject to the packet flooding.

36. The method of Claim 32, wherein the gaming service determines that at least one player is using a filter to block communications with at least one other player.

37. A memory medium storing machine readable instructions for carrying out the steps of Claim 32.